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## Newsletter - 1990-08-23

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# NEWSLETTER

101-1273

23 August 1990

Washington, DC

**WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN.** The future welfare of children in this nation and the rest of the world continues to be one of our greatest challenges. For this reason the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is hosting a World Summit on Children at the UN headquarters in New York September 29-30. Already 38 Presidents (including our own), 20 Prime Ministers and two Kings have confirmed that they will participate and more are expected to do so. **According to UNICEF the Summit on Children will be the biggest gathering of world leaders in history;** that's how important the subject is considered to be. The Summit will focus on universal problems affecting children, including protection of their health from preventable diseases, adequate nutrition, education, homelessness and abandonment, drugs, the impact of AIDS, child labor and exploitation, and basic community services.

Now that the world is becoming less preoccupied with East-West tensions there could be no better new preoccupation than trying to help our children. One and a half billion will be born in the decade of the 1990s. In the 10 years ahead UNICEF thinks the following are reachable goals if we give the world's children our best efforts: Provide universal access to safe drinking water; Reduce by at least one-third the nearly 15 million children under five years of age who die every year; Reduce malnutrition in developing countries by half (some 40 percent of children in those countries do not have enough to eat). Every one of us has a stake in the future of our children. Here at home we must improve conditions so that they meet minimum standards and serve all children. By this we will set an example for other nations to follow as they try to develop themselves with more democratic and humane standards. That so many world leaders are meeting in New York on these subjects is inspiring to me and I hope it is to you, too.

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**TRUCKS WITH CLEANER FUEL, LESS EMISSIONS.** Texas Land Commissioner Garry Mauro met with officials of the General Motors Corporation Truck Division recently and they jointly announced that GMC will begin producing in 1991 a truck that uses natural gas. These will be quarter and half-ton pickup trucks that will have compressed natural gas canisters instead of gasoline tanks. The primary markets for these vehicles will be fleet owners---such as utility companies--in Texas, California and Colorado. These three states will get the benefits of this program because their natural gas utilities formed a consortium in order to provide a grant of \$936,000 to help fund developmental costs. The GMC intends to expand the program to include vans, suburbans and perhaps school buses by mid-1991. This idea not only is a good way to sell Texas natural gas, it will help hold down oil imports and it's good for the environment. The Texas General Land Office is to be congratulated for helping put it all together.

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**WHO'S THE "FATHER" OF LABOR DAY?** After more than 100 years there is still a "paternity" battle or a "custody" fight going on over that question. Here's the story as I got it from the Library of Congress: Labor unions were still a relatively new idea in 1882 in New York, where in order to call attention to the labor movement a union proclaimed September 5 as "a general holiday for the workingmen in this city." The New York union was the Central Labor Union and the man who thought of the "day off" and did most of the work setting up a parade and a picnic was its Secretary, **Matthew McGuire**. He invited all of the other unions to participate, but he was afraid of nobody showing up for his party. Bosses at the time did not care much for holidays and announced that any workman who stayed out would lose a day's pay. If workmen were intimidated and failed to turn out for the parade the emerging labor movement would look foolish.

On the day of the great event things went surprisingly well. Only a few paraders showed up at first, but they were soon joined by a brass band and 200 men from the Jewelers' Union. Then came a column of bricklayers. Spectators started stepping off the sidewalk to join the marchers and they carried signs saying things like, "Labor Will Be United," "Close the Stores at 6 p.m." and "Less Work and More Pay." **The New York Herald** reported that in the end there were perhaps 10,000 in the parade. In the reviewing stand was powerful labor leader **Peter J. McGuire** (no relation to Matthew McGuire, who first thought of the parade and picnic). Peter J. McGuire was a cofounder of the American Federation of Labor and he gave a widely-reported speech in which he said he thought the day went so well that it ought to be an annual event. Matthew McGuire's union and others across the country repeated the festival every year after that. Five states had made it official by 1887. President Grover Cleveland made Labor Day an official holiday for Federal workers by signing a bill in 1894. Some writers and unions credit Peter J. McGuire with inventing Labor Day and others credit Matthew McGuire. Debate will never end. So who "fathered" Labor Day? Two men named McGuire!

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**A VERY GOOD CAUSE.** It is my honor to serve as this year's Honorary Rio Grande Valley Chairman of the 25th Anniversary Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). The Telethon will be broadcast by KGBT-TV, Channel 4, starting at 8 p.m., Sunday, September 2 and continuing to 6 p.m., Monday, September 3. Money raised by the Telethon helps fund the important work being done by MDA-sponsored researchers seeking treatments and cures for neuromuscular diseases. The Ruben Gonzalez family from the Valley was one of 13 families from around the world who participated in the research program which discovered the location of the gene or genes causing spinal muscular atrophy. MDA scientists are now closer to developing treatments and cures for these diseases and with the continuing support of the people in the Valley and nationwide, these important goals can be achieved. Let's hope this year's Telethon is an all-time record-breaker!

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